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SUBJECT: Jordan Media Reaction to the Annapolis Meeting

Editorial Commentary:

11. "Annapolis: Before and After"

Columnist Samih Ma'aitah in the independent, pro-business Arabic daily Al-Ghad commented November 29, "There is no need to fear that the Annapolis meeting will waste Arab and Palestinian rights. The meeting was not required to resolve the Palestinian issue but to achieve certain things, including the so-called launch of the final negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. The Palestinians and the Israelis wanted the Annapolis meeting to act as an umbrella and to legitimize ongoing bilateral negotiations and they wanted an Arab and international framework for them.... It is not important or expected that the Annapolis meetings would resolve the Golan issue, but rather to reorganize alliances, just like what happened in 1991 when America launched its first attack on Iraq.... As for Hamas that is ruling Gaza, its fear is justified and legitimate. The genuine fear, however, is not from negotiations between the Authority and the occupation entity, but from the disintegration of Hamas' circle of friends and allies in Damascus and Iran. If Damascus' going to Annapolis means a shift in its relations and jump from the Iranian 'titanic', then this would definitely create new variables."

12. "Annapolis: Brilliant Success"

Columnist Nahed Hattar in the independent, opposition Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm on November 29 opined, "Did you think that American imperialism is a charity organization? Did you think that Israel is a regular country with whom disputes could be negotiated? If you thought that, then you can say that the Annapolis conference failed or at least achieved the least requirement: new marathon negotiations without references or commitments for one year. Fine, Annapolis was a brilliant success. Even Syria attended without the Golan issue, and all the Arabs sat at Olmert's table. There are negotiations with a new time bomb. Now that the Palestinians have acknowledged Israel, they are required to acknowledge it as a 'Jewish state', which nullifies the right of return and the legal foundation for the Arab citizens of Israel. The Palestinian Authority, which has accepted everything that Arafat rejected before he died, is now facing another Israeli request for another impossible compromise. And even when the impossible becomes possible in the dark future, the Palestinian negotiators will be faced with yet another impossible request, and so on and so forth."

13. "Will Syria's 'Neutralization' Get It Out of the Axis Of Evil?"

Columnist Oraib Rantawi in the pro-government, pro-Palestinian Arabic daily Ad-Dustour wrote on November 29, "By going to the conference, Syria was not seeking to regain the Golan, but rather it was looking to untie the knots of Arab and international isolation that have been imposed on it over the past three or four years. Relatively speaking, it succeeded in doing that, and in fact one could say that Syrian diplomacy is subject for more successes in future.... Syria's attendance of the Annapolis conference, despite Iran's rejection and its allies' reservations, pushes us to think

that the tactic of 'neutralizing' Syria is working, if not extensively and fully, then gradually."

14. "What Did The Annapolis Conference Achieve?"

Widely-read columnist Fahed Fanek in the leading, government-owned Arabic daily Al-Rai commented November 29, "The seven-year freeze on the peace process and the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations has been interrupted by the Annapolis peace conference, which has not only decided to resume negotiations on the Palestinian track, but also has decided that the ultimate end of negotiations will be the establishment of the Palestinian state before the end of 2008.... Once must admit that the conference could be, at the end of the day, a success or a failure. Yet, the possibility of success is present. Boycotting the conference would only eliminate this possibility. There is so much that the Palestinian party can gain in the face of the occupation and there is nothing to lost, especially since the opponents of the conference, led by Iran, are not proposing any alternative except waiting, which would only serve the settlements, the occupation and the transfer."

15. "Annapolis: A Good Celebration For A Difficult Purpose"

Columnist Nasouh Al-Majali in Al-Rai concluded in a November 29 column, "A long journey of patience and struggle, as well as suffering the Israeli maneuvers, await the Palestinians until the end of 2008, the season of reaping as President Bush specified. The Palestinians have not support except pulling in their domestic ranks, adhering to their rights, and depending on a united Arab position.... a new step has been taken in this big dream and this even bigger historical struggle. We hope it is a promising step, despite the fears and dangers that surround it."

16. "Annapolis' Fruits"

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Columnist Mohammad Amayreh in Al-Rai wrote on November 29, "No two can disagree that the results of the Annapolis conference were modest, albeit within what is expected. The conference did not hold any major surprises. We would not have really needed this international demonstration in that beautiful American city had the intentions of the Israelis were sound and had there been serious movement towards just, comprehensive and lasting solution.... Now it seems that matters have gone back to square one despite glorifying talk that the negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis are going to start soon.... There is an impression that Bush and Olmert are the only winners of this public relations conference. Bush presented himself as the savior capable of peace making, while Olmert appeared as the one concerned for peace.... The meeting also achieved more than just press statements and speeches. Arab countries that have never accepted normalization and diplomatic relations with Israel attended. This is a major gain for Israel."

17. "From Madrid to Annapolis"

Columnist Hussein Al-Rawashdeh in Ad-Dustour observed on November 28, "Anyone who reviews the history of Arab-Israeli relations, with its wars, treaties, explicit and implicit correspondence, would immediately come to the conclusion that Israel will not accept the conditions of peace unless it feels that its survival is threatened. This is currently non-existent.... It is sad that the Arabs and Palestinians have no other choice or alternative, that they go to Annapolis knowing all too well that Tel Aviv is incapable or unwilling to pay the cost of peace, that whoever attended the conference was quite sufficient for Washington, and that the responsibility of liberating Palestine and regaining the Arab rights will be postponed to future generations."

18. "Hamas And Annapolis: The Aborted Opposition"

Columnist Oraib Rantawi in Ad-Dustour commented on November 28, "The speech rallies and the long petitions that were carried out by Hamas against Annapolis will achieve nothing.... Furthermore, Hamas' threats and assurances that what comes out of Annapolis will not be

binding to the Palestinian people are meaningless; in fact, they are not worth the ink they are written in. If the Palestinians and Israelis reach an agreement at Annapolis, with the testimony of fifty countries and organizations, including Syrian, Hamas' ally, then neither Hamas nor any of the other Palestinian organizations would be able to turn their backs to it. These parties would find themselves, once again, on the difficult journey of having to cope with the new agreements.... We are now seeing an example of what extremism does to its people, once they lose their tools and weapons and are deprived of their maneuvering spaces."

¶9. "Annapolis: The Meaning And The Direction"

Columnist Mohammad Abu Rumman in the November 28 edition of Al-Ghad concluded, "The Arabs will not return empty-handed from Annapolis, but they are going to get or even market only illusions to pass on to the Arab public opinion in the current context building up to the upcoming Iran battle! The problem of the Arab moderates is that the doors they are knocking on in search of a way out of the current desperate situations are closed."

¶10. "What Is After Annapolis?"

Former Jordanian Ambassador to the United Nations, Hassan Abu Ni'meh, in Al-Ghad opined on November 28, "The fact is Annapolis is not the last opportunity. It is not even an opportunity at all. The Annapolis meeting was nothing more than another immature attempt to adopt crooked foundations. The hope is that it would be the last attempt in this series of failed experiments leading to that time when a genuine opportunity is found to discuss the entire Arab-Israeli peace issue in line with the principles of international law and justice."

¶11. "Annapolis Meeting: So That The Opportunity Is Not Lost"

Al-Rai's main editorial on November 28 declared, "The Annapolis meeting constituted a proper occasion for the Palestinian and Israeli parties to present their viewpoints to each other. The ball remains in the court of the United States which has called for that meeting and has committed itself - as the U.S. President said yesterday - to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state living side by side with Israel in mutual peace and security."

¶12. "The Conference Of The Last Chance"

Chief Editor Taher Odwan in Al-Arab Al-Yawm wrote on November 27, "It is an opportunity for the moderate Arabs as much as it is for the Israelis. True, it is a one day conference, but it is the headline of a major turning point in the history of the Palestinian cause and the Arab-Israeli conflict. After Annapolis, the Palestinians and Israelis will go into continuous negotiations.... The Israelis have proven throughout history that they are brilliant

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at gaining time and negotiating for the sake of negotiations. Here comes the role of Rice and Bush. If the negotiations turn into what the Israeli delegation wants, then the last chance for peace will collapse. In this lies the loss of American interests that are knee-high in the wars and crises of the Middle East, as well as the loss of the Palestinian and Arab moderates. The Arabs, who have quickly abandoned the diplomacy of the Arab initiative in favor of Bush and Rice's initiative, cannot afford to miss this last opportunity. This is because it would mean the demise of negotiations as a way to liberate the Arab and Palestinian lands and the appearance of new pressures in a regional climate that favors the forces that believe in armed struggle as the only way to regain rights.... The Arabs, and not just the U.S. administration, are required to achieve an accomplishment during the Annapolis negotiations, at least a rhetoric that is in line with their peace initiative. Otherwise, America and not Israel is the one that is occupying the Palestinian and Arab lands with its unlimited political, military and economic support for the occupation in Gaza, the West Bank, Jerusalem, the Golan and Shaba'a farms."

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